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JAMES B. VICKERY'S BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MAINE TOWN REGISTERS AND THE EVOLUTION OF *MAINE HISTORY* FROM NEWSLETTER TO SCHOLARLY JOURNAL

BY HARLAND H. EASTMAN

IN SPRING 1961 the Maine Historical Society decided to reach out to its members through a quarterly *Newsletter*. Volume I, Number 1, appeared in June 1961. The following January the Society announced that future issues would appear quarterly in February, May, August, and November. For the next eight years that schedule was kept. The initial editorial board consisted of Robert Albion, Walter Davis, Elizabeth Ring, Esther Wood, and Robert York. Others who served on the board included Francis O'Brien and James B. Vickery.

The first eight volumes of the *Newsletter* were mimeographed on letter size paper (11 by 8½ inches), sometimes printed back to back, at other times on one side only. The content consisted of Society news, lists of new members, news of other historical societies, recent writings on Maine history in books, periodicals, and newspapers; recent additions to the Society's library; and suggested readings in Maine history. Book reviews appeared from time to time.

In summer 1969 the *Newsletter* became a scholarly journal, a completely new publication presented in customary journal size (9 x 6 inches). It should have been given a new name and a fresh numbering system, but that did not happen. The first issue of the new journal appeared as *Maine Historical Society Newsletter*, Volume 9, Number 1. Four years later the journal's name was changed to *Maine Historical Society Quarterly*, and its name changed once more in 1994 when it became *Maine History*. The appearance of *Maine History* dramatically improved in 2000 with the introduction of perfect binding and full-color covers.

There were few items of lasting interest in the first eight volumes, and that is why those early newsletters are not included in the index fea-



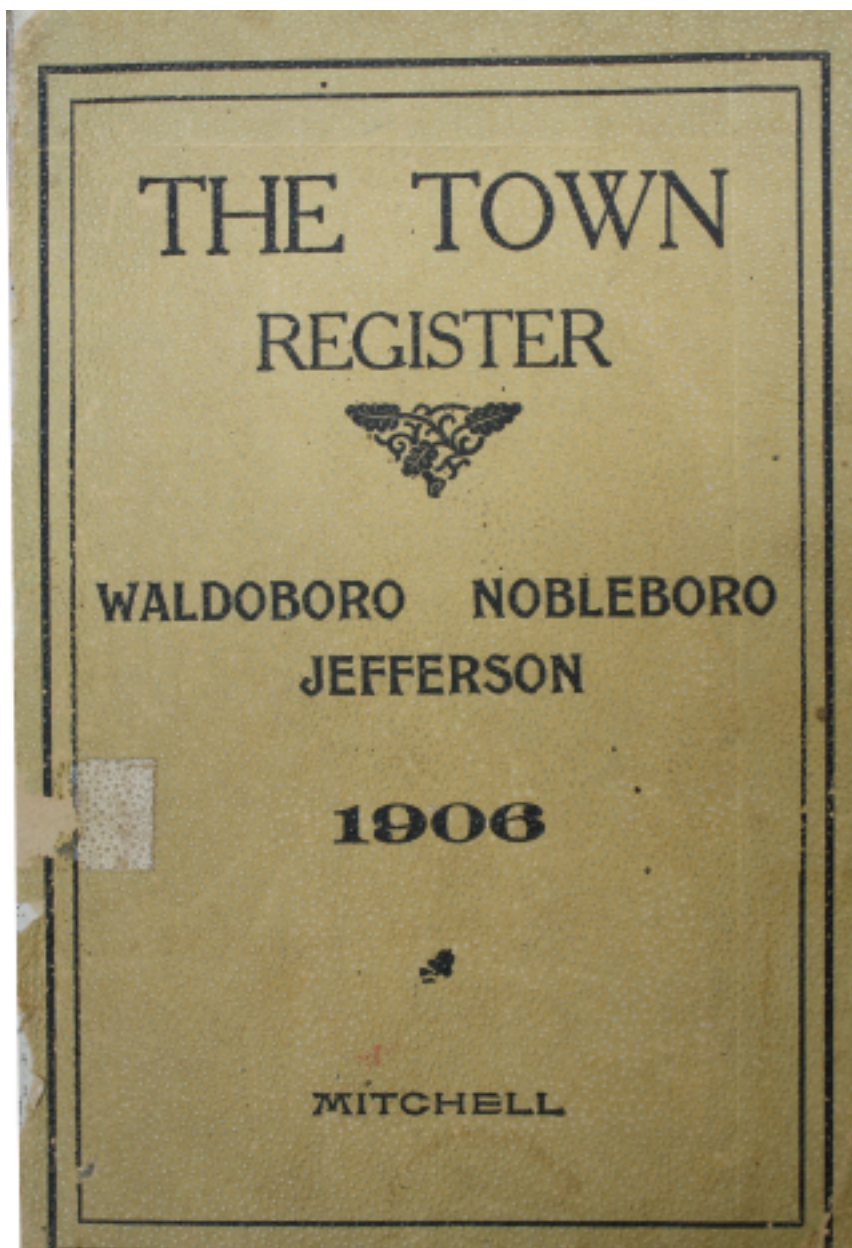
Noted genealogist Walter Goodwin Davis was president of MHS for almost twenty-five years and served on the Editorial Board of the quarterly *Newsletter*, which began publication in 1961. MHS Collections.



James B. Vickery (center) with Richard Judd (left) and Robert Babcock (Right) en route from Orono to a MHS Publications Committee meeting in the early 1990s. Photo by Alice R. Stewart.

tured in this issue of *Maine History*. An exception is the bibliography of Mitchell's Maine Town Registers, published in November 1965. This was prepared by James B. Vickery, Jr., a teacher of English in Brewer High School and author of *A History of the Town of Unity, Maine* (1954). Jim's work as a historian was celebrated in the Fall/Winter 2002 issue of *Maine History*. The entire issue was devoted to him, but his labor in bringing the Mitchell Registers to the attention of historians and genealogists went unmentioned. The importance of his bibliography is such that the Society is republishing it in this issue of *Maine History*.

I was asked to edit and update the information Jim gathered. With input from the Maine State Library and the libraries of Bowdoin College and the Maine Historical Society, the update has been accomplished. Many registers include more than one town. As a result, 182 towns are covered in the 97 Mitchell registers. Jim's bibliography arranges them alphabetically by the first town mentioned. Every town has now been cross-referenced for the benefit of those doing research. A few registers not in Jim's list have been added. What follows are Jim's introduction to the bibliography as printed in the 1965 *Newsletter* (with a few editorial comments inserted) and the updated bibliography itself.



Mitchell's Waldoboro, Nobleboro, and Jefferson Town Register, 1902-1903. A trove of genealogical information from census materials, post office records, and town offices, the registers also provide valuable information on the histories of the towns they cover, often unobtainable elsewhere. Courtesy Bangor Public Library.